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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1994

RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1774

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001029

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/03/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL SNAR KDEM HA

SUBJECT: PREVAL CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PM CANDIDATE;

LOOKING TO REFORM CONSTITUTION

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald L. Moore for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) In a 70 minute meeting with the Ambassador on July 17, Haitian President Rene Preval declared his intention to move forward with reforming the Haitian constitution. Preval remains convinced that key threat to Haitian political stability is the flawed constitution. He intends to call together political parties, civil society, trade unions, and others to address the imbalances in the Constitution and the expensive, continuous rounds of elections provided for by the document. He would like to immediately find a way to change the time-consuming amendment process, and may consider bringing it to a vote when the senatorial elections take place. He went on at length on this issue and said that in order to deal with it, he would need a national consensus and international support.

12. (C) Persuaded by the Ambassador to move on to the more pressing matter of the moment, the Prime Minister ratification process, Preval said he has great respect for PM-designate Michele Pierre-Louis and believes she is an outstanding candidate who will serve her country well. He had just ended a phone conversation with her, just after the Chamber of Deputies' ratification of her candidacy. Preval would not predict how the Senate might vote and refused to speculate on who was behind the political machinations in that body. He did acknowledge that it would be ''a crisis'' even if she is confirmed, because of the difficulty of putting together a government agreeable to the parliament, and ''a crisis if she was not'' confirmed as well. There are, however, thousands of people who want to be PM, and if she does not pass he said he will start the process over to find the best candidate. For the moment, he will do what he can to help Pierre-Louis succeed.

13. (C) Preval firmly rebuffed the Ambassador's question about whether he would give Pierre-Louis sufficient independence to work, saying that he is not going to interfere with her Prime Ministry. She needs support but will have to make her own way and set her own course. He did note that the policy declaration presentation would be based strongly on the DSNCRP (an economic growth and poverty reduction strategy) drafted by the Alexis government.

¶4. (C) Preval denied allegations that he has held back in his discussions with political parties and parliamentary blocs on the way forward for Haiti. He worked hard for Pierre-Louis' nomination and will continue to do so. He has had many meetings with parties and parliamentary blocs. He does find it frustrating because they are all over the map on how to deal with him and the PM nominee. Some want perks, some want cabinet posts, and some want simply to flex their political muscle and ensure future political success.

¶5. (C) Responding to my question about reports that he is refusing to negotiate an "inclusive government," Preval said that he is willing to talk to anyone who wants to play a positive role in the country's governance, although he believes it is not appropriate to have these discussions until his Prime Minister-designate is confirmed. He said the process of forming a government is not as simple as it seems.

The political landscape has changed since 2006. Parliamentary blocs, not political parties, hold the balance of power in dealing with the government. Parties are not talking to their members in the blocs and vice versa. The Chamber is not talking to the Senate. Preval said it is political chaos. He is not opposed to some type of "national consensus" government and he has discussed a "national compact" arrangement with civil society and political party representatives. However, if the parties who are demanding ministerial portfolios, and the parliamentary blocs which are doing the same, cannot agree, forming a government will be a protracted and difficult process.

¶6. (C) Preval agreed with the Ambassador's concerns that the people of Haiti are suffering during this period of political turbulence, and the gains of the past two years are beginning to crumble. He also said that he will work hard to get

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Pierre-Louis into office and will work in good faith with the political class here to do so. The Ambassador stressed the need for this process to move rapidly, as too much time and ground has already been lost. Haiti's friends in the international community, including the USG, want to be helpful. We have demonstrated that desire through, for example, our enhanced assistance programs, strong political/financial/military commitment, and support to MINUSTAH, but the political leadership, including the President, needs to work together and resolve this political impasse. Haiti needs a government. Preval agreed, and expressed cautious optimism that the Senate would confirm Pierre-Louis as early as Tuesday and would then begin the process of forming her -- he was careful to say "her" -- government. (Note: Preval's statements track with the talking points the acting UN SRSG used in a meeting with Preval July 16. End note.) Preval conducted the meeting alone, and apart from his routine reference to drugs and Guy Philippe, he was more relaxed than in any meeting with the Ambassador in some time.

MOORE